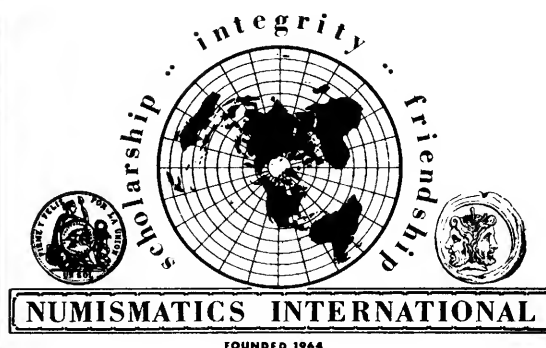


39 years of service to numismatics



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### FEATURES

Ancient Chinese Cash Notes – the World's First Paper Money, Part II, by John E. Sandrock.....	353
Relics I: The Holy Family, by Bob Forrest.....	367

### DEPARTMENTS

Book News & Reviews.....	374
From the Mailbox.....	352

### INSIDE N.I.

Donations Report.....	351
From the Editor's Desk .....	352
Membership Chairman's Report .....	351
NI Meeting & Educational Forum at 2004 ANA Show in Portland .....	351

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# INSIDE N.I.

## MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

**December 2003 Applications for Membership:** The following person has applied for membership. If no written objections are received by February 1, 2004, the membership will become effective on that date.

2655-MT      Alejandro Safie



## DONATIONS REPORT

We have received the following donations since the last report:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Donation</u>	<u>Preference of Use</u>
BRESTICKER, Dr. Stanley	\$10.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
DAVIS, J. William	\$35.00 Cash	NI Publications Fund
DAVIS, Warren O.	\$5.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
DE LORENZO, Frank A.	\$15.00 Cash	NI Library Fund
HARANO, Takao	\$10.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
HIETT, Dr. Robert A.	\$5.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
HINKLE, David R.	\$100.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
KUTCHER, Robert R.	\$10.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
LENZ, James R.	\$10.00 Cash	NI Library Fund
LINN, Kennie M.	\$10.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
MACCINI, Charles	\$25.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
MOKAITIS, L.	\$10.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
PIKE, J.	\$10.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
TODD, William S.	\$2.00 Cash	General Operating Fund
WITTER, Dwayne R.	\$20.00 Cash	General Operating Fund



## NI MEETING & EDUCATIONAL FORUM AT 2004 ANA SHOW IN PORTLAND

The next American Numismatic Association (ANA) National Money Show will be held in Portland, Oregon from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2004, at the Oregon Convention Center. The show is hosted by the Williamette Coin Club and the show chairman is Larry Gaye. If you want more information about the show, please contact the convention staff at the ANA at [convention@money.org](mailto:convention@money.org) and/or Larry Gay at [Light.Man@Verizon.com](mailto:Light.Man@Verizon.com).

The Numismatics International (NI) General Meeting and Educational Forum will be held on Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. The room has not yet been assigned but the time will be 12 Noon and more information can be obtained in the show program when you register if the room number is not published by show time. NI will also be sharing a club table with the IBNS and NBS.

Howard A. Daniel III will be the moderator of the meeting, and the speaker will be Scott Semans. The title of his talk is "Successful Formats for Numismatic Books". Scott is a specialist in Asia, Africa and worldwide primitive pieces, and also stocks

many, many references in his inventory. You can see his stock at [www.coincoin.com](http://www.coincoin.com).

Please bring one piece or set, or even a reference, to talk about in the “show and tell” portion of the meeting. You can contact Howard at [Howard@SEAsianTreasury.com](mailto:Howard@SEAsianTreasury.com).



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It has been over 2-1/2 years since we last made an appeal to the membership for help with items to publish. Our supply of articles has dwindled in the last few months with practically nothing new coming in, other than items from our regular contributors. Many of you said that you would contribute articles for publication when you made your initial application for membership in NI. However, only a few members have come through with items for publication. We want to thank the regular contributors like Paul Baker, Bob Forrest, Carlos Jara Moreno, Roger deWardt Lane, Ken MacKenzie, John Sandrock and David Spencer Smith for their dedicated support, but they need some help from other members to keep our publication up to its excellent standard. The driving force behind the *NI Bulletin* since its inaugural edition in February 1967 has been the continued support of the membership in contribution of articles for publication. Let's continue this tradition in the years ahead.

If you have not contributed anything recently, we challenge you to come through with your original promise of submitting items for publication. We are always in need of material of different subject matter to have a wide range of topics in each issue.

Also, we urge all members to make use of the Member Notice Page. This is the second consecutive month in which we did not have anything to publish. Those that use the page continually say that it works.

\*\*\*\*\*

## FROM THE MAILBOX

*Crown on Qandahar copper fulus of 1296 AH possibly copied from a British Regimental Badge*

In response to my recent article “More on Qandahar Coppers and the Afghan British Crown” (*NI Bulletin* September 2003, pp.273-275) I received a very interesting note from Kenneth MacKenzie (NI #364). In my article I mentioned Pridmore's (1976) suggestion that the crown on the Qandahar copper fulus of 1296 AH might have been copied from a regimental button. I was unaware of an *NI Bulletin* article (January 1983, pp.22-23) by Kenneth MacKenzie on “Quandahari Copper Coins” which made the same suggestion, but backed it with an illustration of a British Regimental badge, of the 9<sup>th</sup> Queen's Royal Lancers, that incorporates a crown that could well have served as the model for that on the copper coin. He notes that this was the only British regiment “in Lt. Gen. Donald Stewart's Qandahar Field Force (which was mainly Indian Army units), which crossed the frontier 21<sup>st</sup> November 1878 and entered the city.”

David Spencer Smith  
Miami, Florida

# ANCIENT CHINESE CASH NOTES – THE WORLD'S FIRST PAPER MONEY

## PART II

*John E. Sandrock*

### Ming Dynasty Paper Money

In contrast to Yüan heavy reliance upon paper notes, the follow-on Ming and Ch'ing dynasty economies were based principally upon copper cash coins and silver. Paper money was occasionally used by the Ming government; however little effort was made to control and maintain its value. The first Ming paper money appeared in 1374, the product of the Precious Note Control Bureau (the name was later changed to the Board of Revenue) specifically set up for this purpose. The notes themselves were called "Ta Ming T-ung Hsing Pao Ch'ao", Great Ming Precious Notes. Emperor T'ai Tsu's reign title was Hung-wu. This nien-hao appeared on these notes and successive Ming issues, regardless of the fact that all Ming emperors had their own reign titles. This was an honor given to the founder of the dynasty. *Ch'uan Pu T'ung Chih* refers to sixty different notes issued between 1368-1426. In all probability there were many more.

From the beginning these notes were inconvertible and could not be exchanged for coin. Notes of the Hung-wu reign (1368-1398 AD) were issued in denominations of 100, 200, 300, 400, 500 and 1000 cash. One string of paper (1000 cash) was the equivalent of 1000 copper coins or one ounce of pure silver. In 1389 smaller value notes of 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 cash were printed to facilitate trade. It is reported that the mulberry bark paper used to make the T'ai Tsu notes was recycled from the waste of government ministries and Civil Service examination papers. There were three distinct issues of Ming notes as follows: all bearing the reign title "Hung-wu". These notes circulated throughout the entire kingdom.

1. Those of the emperor T'ai Tsu, issued in 1375 AD
2. Those of emperor Ch'eng Tsu (1403-1424 AD)
3. Those of emperor Jen Tsung, son of Ch'eng Tsu, issued in 1425 AD

Reflecting the inflation then being experienced, Ch'eng Tsu paper money consisted of notes denominated 1 through 20 kwan, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 and 50 kwan all bearing pictorial presentation of the equivalent amount of cash coins, each coin representing five cash. Various cloud and dragon designs adorned their borders. Their color was gray.

The unfortunate Jen Tsung died shortly after ascending the throne. In the short eight months of his reign, twenty denominations were emitted. Beginning with 10 cash, they proceeded by tens to 100 cash and then by hundreds to 1000 cash. They were known as Great Ming Military Administration Treasury Notes. Pictorial presentations on this series consisted of the equivalent in strings of cash.



Ming dynasty 200 cash note of the emperor T'ai Tsu, who took the reign title Hung-wu in 1368. The pictorial representation is of two string of cash.



Ming dynasty 50 kwan note of Ch'eng Tsu (1403-1424 AD). The pictograph in the top rectangle depicts ten five cash coins, meant to represent currently circulating coins from the preceding Hung-wu era. (Schj th catalog numbers S-1156-S-1157.)



Yüan dynasty 90 cash note of emperor Shun Ti (1333-1367 AD) at left, together with a Ming dynasty 1000 cash note of emperor Jen Tsung (1425 AD), right. Jen Tsung's reign lasted but one year. Both notes measure approximately 3 ½ by 8 ½ inches and depict strings of copper cash. From the Chinese work entitled *Ch'uan Pu T'ung Chih*.



The value of all these notes rapidly declined, eventually to the point where the people would not accept them. By the end of the century it took 35 strings to buy an ounce of silver. Twenty years later it took 80 strings to buy an ounce. Erosion in the value of paper escalated until by the mid 1400s an ounce of silver commanded 1000 strings in paper! Silver was rapidly supplanting paper as a medium of exchange. The Great Ming Precious Notes gradually disappeared from commerce. After 1455 works on Chinese history make no mention of them. In the last year of the Ming dynasty (1643 AD) a memorial was sent to the emperor proposing the revival of a paper currency. Set forth in the memorial, were a list of ten arguments for a new paper currency. These advantages were cited as:

1. Paper money can be manufactured at a low cost.
2. It can circulate widely.
3. Being lightweight, it can be carried with ease.
4. It can be readily concealed.
5. Paper money is not divisible, like silver, into various grades.
6. Paper money did not have to be weighed when used, as did silver.
7. Dishonest money changers could not "clip" it for their own profit.
8. It could not be exposed to the preying eyes of thieves.
9. Should paper replace copper coins, the copper saved could be used for making armaments.
10. Should paper replace silver, the silver saved could be stored up by the government.

The proposal, however, was not adopted, as by that late date the government was too weak to benefit from such a scheme. Chinese commerce was to exist without paper for the next four hundred years.

Without question, the Ming note most widely known, and perhaps the only specimen available to collectors today, is the 1 kwan of emperor T'ai Tsu. Enough of these notes have survived to be found in many museums and private collections. The story of how they came to be preserved is an interesting one. As far as I can ascertain most Ming 1 kwan notes available today came from two sources. The first of these stemmed from an incident, which occurred during the Boxer Rebellion. In 1908 H. B. Morse published a book entitled *Trade and Administration of the Chinese Empire* containing a lithographic facsimile of the Ming 1 kwan note. In the book he gives a complete description of the note together with translations of the Chinese characters found on it. Morse also tells of the manner in which the note was acquired, which goes as follows:

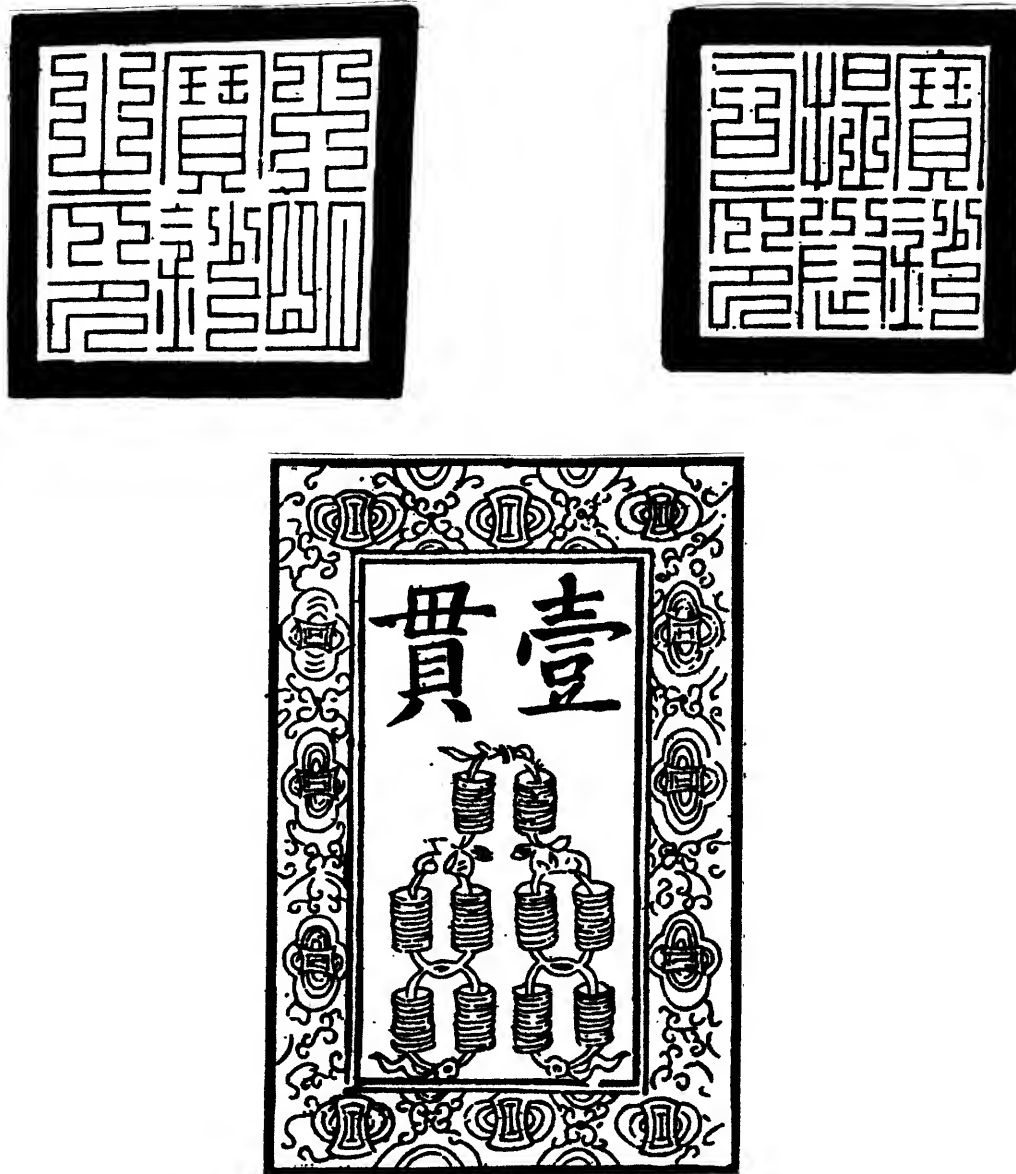
"This five hundred year old instrument of credit has a curious history furnishing an absolute guarantee of its authenticity. During the foreign occupation of Peking in 1900, some European soldiers had overthrown a sacred image of Buddha, in the grounds of the Summer Palace. Deposited in the pedestal (as in the corner-stones of our public buildings) were found gems and jewelry and ingots of gold and silver and a bundle of these notes. Contented with the loot's intrinsic value, the soldiers readily surrendered the bundle of notes to a bystander, U. S. Army Surgeon Major Lewis Seaman, who was unofficially present. He gave the Museum of St. John's College in Shanghai the specimen which is here reproduced."



Ming dynasty 1 kwan note of the Hung-wu era (1368-1398). This large note, printed on gray mulberry bark paper, measures 8 x 11 ½ inches. The two vermilion seals shown in the next illustration do not appear on this prototype. This is the only ancient Chinese paper money likely to be found in private collections today.

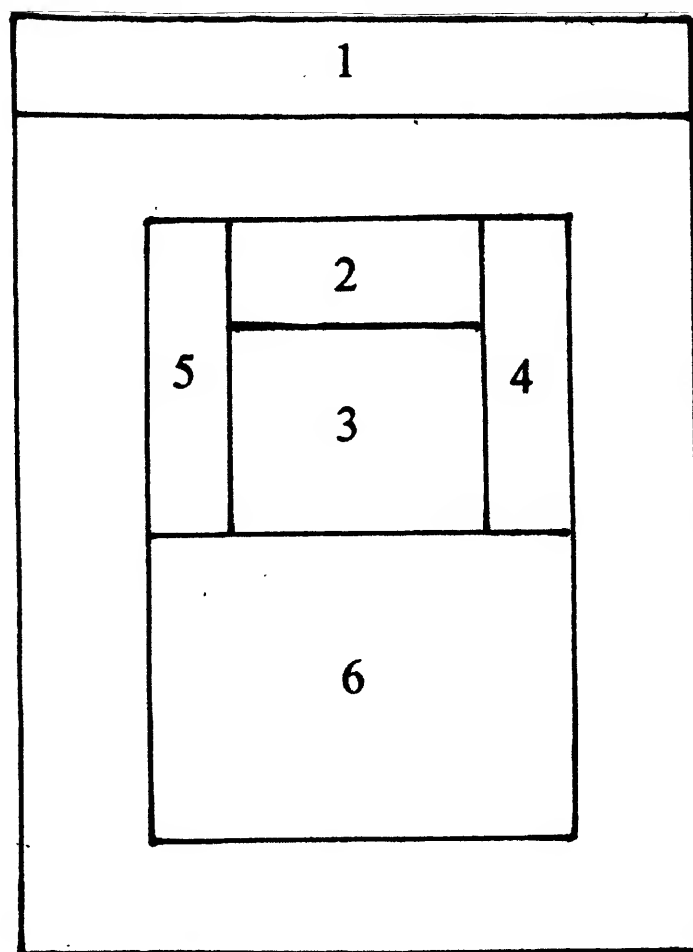
The second report concerning the discovery of Ming 1 kwan notes concerns the Reverend Mr. Ballou, a long time missionary, who was born in China and resided there until after World War II. Reverend Ballou states that he received his Ming note from his friend L. Carrington Goodrich who had been associated with Yencheng University in Peking during the 1930s. Mr. Goodrich related that he acquired the note under the following circumstances:

“Sometime in 1936 one of the walls surrounding Peking was torn down. When the laborers got to the huge gate in the wall, they found to their surprise, a large bale of 1 kwan Ming dynasty banknotes buried in the wall itself. After removing the soiled and damaged ones, the workers sold the notes to those persons standing around. Mr. Goodrich came upon his note at that time. He told Reverend Ballou that he purchased two of them for a few coppers, which amounted to just a few pennies.”



Two official government seals appear on the face of the Ming 1 kwan note. They were pressed into the finished note with wooden blocks using vermilion ink, thereby authenticating it. These seals can still be plainly seen on most 1 kwan notes in collections today. The seal at upper left reads “Seal of the Great Ming Treasure Note”; the seal at right “Seal of the Office of the Superintendent of Treasure”. At the bottom may be seen a black seal placed on the reverse of the 1 kwan note to indicate its value. The ten strings represent 1000 copper cash, which equaled 1 kwan.

Inasmuch as the 1 kwan note is the only one likely to be found in collections today and without a doubt the oldest piece of world paper money one can aspire to own, it is perhaps worthy of detailed discussion. Translation of the principal inscriptions found on the note are as shown in the accompanying panel diagram:



1. "Great Ming General Circulation Treasure Note".
2. "One kwan".
3. A pictorial presentation of ten strings of 100 cash (= 1000 cash = 1 kwan).
4. "Great Ming Treasure Note" in seal style characters.
5. "To circulate forever and ever under the heavens" in seal script.
6. The lower panel text reads: "The Board of Revenue, having petitioned and received the imperial sanction, prints the Great Ming Precious Note, to be current and to be used as standard copper cash. The counterfeiter shall be decapitated. The informant shall be rewarded 250 taels of silver, and in addition shall be given the entire property of the criminal."

The last column of characters at the left of the bottom panel, show the date as: "Hung-wu era, ...year, ...month, ...day". The note was manufactured from recycled gray mulberry bark paper. Two vermilion seals were impressed into the note by government officials to authenticate it. The upper of these seals reads: "Seal of the Treasure Note of the Great Ming Dynasty"; the lower of the two bears the inscription: "Seal of the Office of the Superintendent of the Treasury".

## Some Numismatic Observations

The first observation I would like to make concerns the definition of the term “ancient Chinese paper money”. What exactly, is meant by “ancient”? For me the term, when applied to our subject, encompasses those notes which relate to the earliest and remotest periods in Chinese history. Since the ancient style notes continued to be printed into the nineteenth century, this causes a problem. Paper money ceased to exist in China after being repudiated by the masses during Ming dynasty times and was not to be seen again for four hundred years. During the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1865), emperor Wen Tsung again resorted to financing his wars with paper money resembling its forebears. Are these notes to be included? I think not, as the period encompassing the nineteenth century can hardly be considered “ancient”. I bring this up as most authors lump the Hsien-feng notes into the overall category of ancient notes. I have not. The notes of the Taiping Rebellion deserve discussion in their own right. Therefore, I have chosen not to include them.

My next observation concerns the failure on the part of modern day catalogers to include these notes in their works. The *Standard Catalog of World Paper Money* makes reference to only two Ming notes. Why is this, when so much information regarding their authenticity is available? Today we know that notes of the Sung, Chin, Liao, Yüan and Ming dynasties have survived. Of the Tang dynasty flying money or Posterior Chou and Western Hsia dynasty paper I have no information as to surviving specimens. Many un-cataloged notes may be found in museums and private collections. Of those that no longer exist a great deal is known thanks to surviving Chinese numismatic works and to archeological discoveries. Why then are they not included? Is it because notes that no longer exist (or have yet to be discovered) cannot be collected and therefore do not deserve a place in our numismatic catalogs? I think numismatists have a deeper appreciation for history and their hobby than that.

Some may be curious as to the value of these ancient notes. The answer is simplicity itself – they are, with the sole exception of T'ai Tsu's one kwan Ming note, priceless. Many specimens known today are unique, others are known to exist in only two or three collections or museums. The only ancient note one could reasonably hope to obtain today is the Ming 1 kwan note, due to the fortunate discoveries in 1900 and 1936 mentioned above. The price of a reasonable example, intact, completely legible and with seals affixed that are still clearly discernable would command between \$1,000 and \$1,500 on today's market.

A discussion of ancient paper money would not be complete were one to ignore the extensive counterfeiting of these notes, which was at all times an immense problem for administrative officials. From the earliest known issues cash notes always carried a clause in the text, which called for capital punishment – usually decapitation. Those who covered up or condoned such crimes were to suffer the same fate. It was also stated in the text that a reward would be paid to the informer of such acts. These rewards were to be paid in silver taels, of varying amounts, depending upon the denomination of the note counterfeited. It also appears that such rewards fluctuated with the severity of the problem at any one point in time. In reality, punishment meted out to those who ran the risk of falsifying banknotes varied widely during different periods.

When emperor Shih Tsung of the Posterior Chou ascended the throne in 951 AD he was in great need of funds. He seized over 3350 monasteries and then gave orders to melt all Buddhist bronze images found there so that they could be turned into cash. The emperor declared that Buddha himself would raise no objection, having in his lifetime given up so much for mankind. The shortage of money also caused the emperor to send a fleet to Korea to trade silk for copper with which to mint cash coins. Given these drastic measures it is not surprising that the Chou also resorted to paper. The Chou counterfeiting clause reflected the mood of the times when it stated: "The counterfeiter of this denomination – principal or conspirator irrespectively – shall be immediately executed by the authorities of the district concerned and be exposed to public view."

During the Sung dynasty the punishment seems to have been limited to banishment, although a case is on record reporting the public decapitation of one greedy fellow who was caught with 250 counterfeit notes in his possession! During the following Chin and Yüan periods the problem must have become more severe, as the punishment reverted to decapitation. By Ming times paper money became so depreciated and was so disliked by the peasants that local officials treated these criminals more leniently, often letting the miscreant off with only a fine. One emission of notes stated a desire to single out only the true offenders, offering amnesty to accomplices who confessed their wrongdoing.

Several types of counterfeiting were prevalent. Of course, the most frequently encountered were notes printed from counterfeit blocks or plates. Another form of counterfeiting, known as "pasting", consisted of notes that were pasted together from bits of other notes so that one kwan became ten and so on. For this type of counterfeiting the punishment was less severe than for printing.

A most original solution to the counterfeiting problem occurred in Sung times after a large shipment of counterfeit money had been seized. During the discussion as to what should be done with the counterfeiters, one court official stated that the current policy of beheading the criminals and destroying their money was a mistake. He proposed instead the following: "If you put the official imperial stamp on the counterfeited paper, it will be just as good as genuine paper. If you punish these men only by tattooing them, and circulate these notes, it is exactly as if you saved each day 300,000 copper cash together with fifty lives." It is said that the proposition was adopted.

Lastly I would like to call to the reader's attention to an anomaly I noted some years ago when inspecting a specimen of the Ming 1 kwan note. It concerns the depiction of strings of cash shown on the face and reverse of the note. As early as Sung times representations of coins found their way onto their paper money counterparts. In ancient times, when the majority of the population consisted of an illiterate peasantry, it was necessary to identify the value of the paper money note by placing ideograms or pictographs upon it which everyone could recognize. This practice was continued by succeeding dynasties; up to and including the Ming.

Individual coins were sometimes depicted but more often, because the intrinsic value of a single coin was so low, they were shown grouped together as strings, or groups of strings. A standard string was theoretically composed of one thousand cash, which were strung together to facilitate handling. Each string of one thousand cash coins had the equivalent value of one ounce of pure silver.

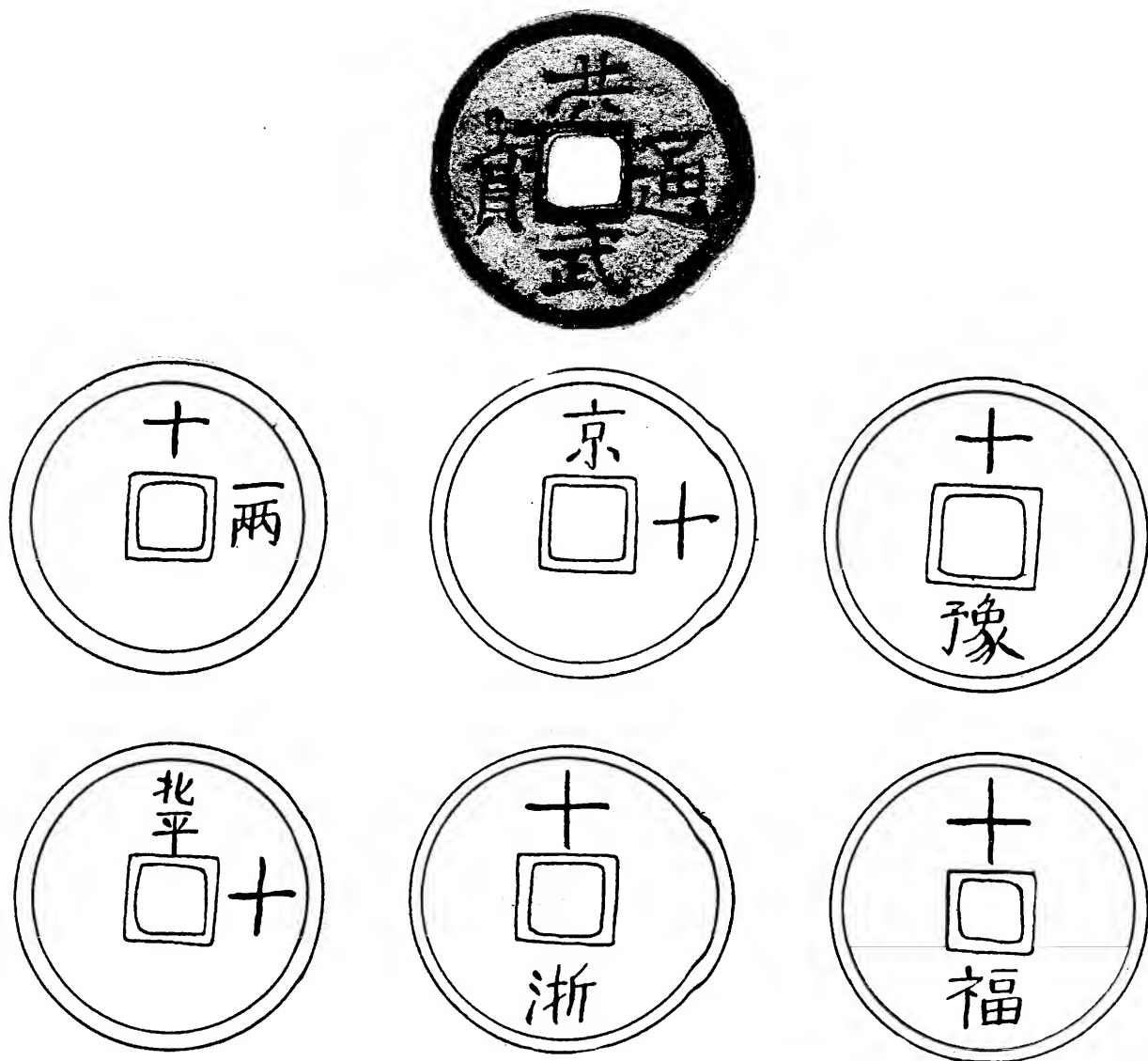
When one examines the 1 kwan note of Hung-wu closely he finds a depiction of what appears to be at first glance ten strings of ten coins each which must be considered to be of 10 cash denomination. Thus ten strings x ten coins per string x 10 cash per coin = 1,000 cash, or 1 kwan. In reality what is depicted are ten strings of 10 cash coins; however on close examination we will find that there are only nine coins to a string. Aha! This is interesting. Could it be a mistake on the engraver's part? This cannot be the answer as a check of other cash notes in this series reveals the same anomaly, i.e., only nine 10 cash coins per string, or 900 cash.



This blow-up of the strings of cash depicted on the Ming 200 cash note of Hung-wu reveals but nine 10 cash coins per string, not the ten one would expect. Ten strings of ten coins each representing 10 cash would equal 1000 cash, or one ounce of silver, otherwise known as 1 kwan. This was the official ratio of cash to an ounce of silver. A depiction of nine 10 cash coins per string is found on all Ming dynasty notes of 100 cash and above. So why are there only nine coins per string? There is an explanation! Lower Ming denominations showed individual coins corresponding to the face value of the note.

I have concluded, therefore, that the representation of only nine coins, or 90 cash per string, was deliberate. But how can 900 cash be the same as 1000 cash? The explanation, I believe, lies in the fact that during the Hung-wu reign 900 cash passed for 1000; just as 770 cash represented a string in Sung dynasty times and 800 during the Chin dynasty. In other words the government's financial arm, the Board of Revenue, must have set the relation of cash coin to the value of a string by decree. Thus the official value of cash in the marketplace would vary from time to time.

As we have seen, the pictorial representations of cash seen on ancient Chinese banknotes are highly picturesque, tending more to reality than surrealism. One may therefore conclude that the imagery of the coins contained in each string actually depicted the real thing. If this is so, one must ask: "What exact coin was being represented?" It would have to be 10 cash piece, which circulated side-by-side with paper money. Ming coinage production consisted overwhelmingly of one cash "square holes" augmented occasionally by value "two's", "three's" and "fives". But what of the value "ten" cash pieces? A close examination reveals that the Ming Board of Revenue minted ten cash pieces on only three occasions. The first of these was during the Ta-chung era (1364-1367 AD), and the second during the Hung-wu era (1368-1398 AD). The final Ming 10 cash coin issue appeared late in the dynasty (1621-1627 AD) under the reign period of T'ien-ch'i.



Ming 10 cash coin of the Hung-wu reign (1368-1398 AD) together with six reverses depicting the value as "ten cash of a tael" and five other coins with mint marks representing Nanking, Honan, Peking, Chekiang and Fukien. This coin was most certainly the one represented on Ming dynasty cash notes.



Since the 1 kwan Ming note states that it was sanctioned by emperor T'ai Tsu for release under the Hung-wu reign title, the earliest date during which Hung-wu 1 kwan paper money circulated would have been the year 1368. From this extrapolation we can eliminate the 10 cash pieces of the T'ien-chi era, since they did not enter circulation until almost three hundred years later. That leaves us with the ten cash pieces of Ta-chung and Hung-wu eras, either of which could have been the coins represented by the pictograms. More than likely the contemporary coins of Hung-wu were those shown in these illustrations, those whose legend reads "Hung-wu t'ung-pao" (current money of Hung-wu). If this be so, we have narrowed our identification down to a series of six 10 cash pieces minted from 1368-1398 AD. All bear the character "shih" (ten) on their reverse. One specimen has in addition the characters "yi-liang" (one tael). When read together the inscription reads "10 cash of a tael", much as we say "10 cents of a dollar". The remaining five specimens vary only by the position of the "shih" and the location of the mint mark – "ching" for Nanking, "yu" for Honan, "Pei-p'ing" for the Pei-p'ing Fu mint in Chili, "che" for Chekiang and "fu" for the Fukien mint. These coins are identified in Schj  th's catalog *The Currency of the Far East* as S1158-1163. I believe these 10 cash pieces to be those appearing in the pictorial representation found on Ming dynasty paper money.

In the field of paper money research there is probably more yet to be discovered among ancient Chinese cash notes than in any other area. There is no doubt that additional discoveries will be forthcoming from yet to be explored archeological sites.

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## RELICS I: THE HOLY FAMILY

*Bob Forrest, Manchester, England, NI #2382*

Sooner or later the collector of religious medals must enter the controversial field of relics, for a large number of medals relate to them. But whether you regard relics as demonstrative of religious piety or as symptomatic of human gullibility, it doesn't really matter. Either way they are a phenomenon of the human religious condition, and a fascinating one at that.

In an earlier article (1) I referred to the seamless robe of Christ – the seamless robe for which the soldiers dived at the foot of the Cross (John 19.23-4). This robe – the Holy Coat, as it came to be known – was one of the many relics brought back from the Holy Land by St. Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, on her pilgrimage of AD 326-8. She brought it back to her palace at Treveri, now Trier, which is how – or so it is said – the Holy Coat ended up in the Cathedral there. The bronze medal shown 1½ times actual size in Fig. 1 relates to this relic. The obverse shows the garment itself, with legend DER HL. ROCK ZU TRIER (= the Holy Coat at Trier), and the reverse the Cathedral at Trier (DOM ZU TRIER). The medal bears the date 1891 on the reverse, this being the year of one of its major expositions, when nearly two million pilgrims came to venerate it (2).

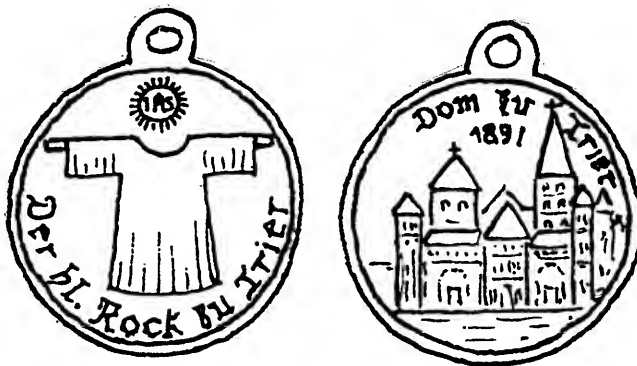


Fig. 1

But as I pointed out in my previous article, the Holy Coat of Trier has a rival, for there is another Holy Coat – also claiming to be the one that the soldiers dived over at the foot of the Cross – which is preserved at the parish church of Argenteuil on the north-west outskirts of Paris. It is said to have been brought there by Charlemagne, though as with the Holy Coat of Trier, there is no documentary mention of it before about the 12<sup>th</sup> century (2), prompting skeptical claims that a bit of judicious carbon dating would show medieval skulduggery afoot, as it did in the case of the Turin Shroud.

The bronze medal shown 1½ times actual size in Fig. 2 relates to the Holy Coat of Argenteuil. Its obverse shows the Holy Coat with legend SR. DE LA STE. TUNIQUE / ARGENTEUIL (= Souvenir of the Holy Tunic / Argenteuil.) Its reverse shows the Church of Our Lady of Humility (EGLISE N.D. D'HUMILITE) at Argenteuil.

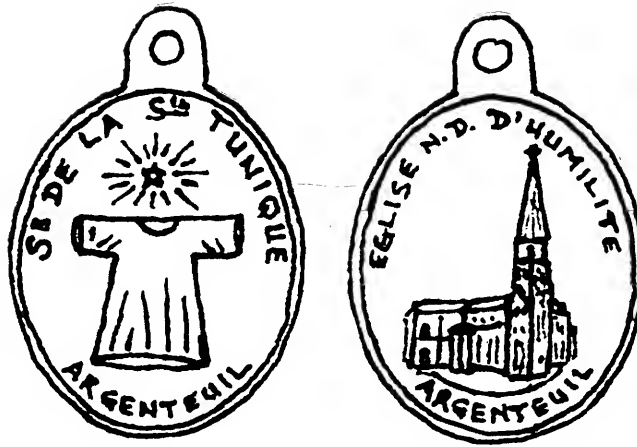


Fig. 2

Incidentally, in December 1983 the Holy Coat of Argenteuil was 'kidnapped' by the extreme left-wing group Action Directe. Its safe return was promised on payment of 300,000 francs and the release from prison of three of the group's members. The church stood firm, refusing either to pay up or intercede for the terrorists, and two months later the relic was returned to the church unharmed (3).

The duplication of the Holy Coat – there is another at Mantua, by the way (1) – is a problem for the faithful, though a relatively minor one in comparison to the embarrassing number of Holy Nails. Christ was crucified with four nails – or three if you adhere to the tradition of his crossed legs (4a). That twenty nine places in Europe claim to possess such nails (4b) is therefore a problem, though the faithful have come up with some ingenious counter-arguments – for example, that some nails were those needed to hold the Cross itself together; that the original nails were cut down into several smaller nails, so that they might be shared more widely among the faithful; and that some nails are actually secondary relics – that is, they were largely new nails, but made to incorporate into their fabric a few filings from the original nails (4c). Incidentally, talking of nails, in my article cited in note 1 I pointed out that St. Helena is said to have given three Holy Nails to Constantine the Great, who promptly incorporated one into a statue of himself, stuck another in his helmet, and made a bit for his horse from the third. I went on to say that putting these holy relics to such mundane uses – most particularly the third one! – seemed to indicate a serious lack of due reverence on the part of the supposedly pious Emperor and champion of Christianity. Not so, it seems – at least, not if you accept the explanation offered by some of the early Church Fathers who claimed that in making a bit for his horse Constantine was acting in accordance with the prophecy of Zechariah 14.20: "In that day shall there be upon the bridles of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD" (4d). I would add, however, that St. Jerome thought this application of Holy Writ to have been made with feeling and piety, but that it was ridiculous all the same.

As much of a problem as the duplication of the Holy Nails is the multiplicity of thorns from the Crown of Thorns (4e), and it is well known that the multiplicity of fragments of the True Cross has caused much heated debate. It was John Calvin who first claimed that if all the fragments scattered throughout Christendom were collected together again "they would form a whole ship's cargo" (5a), a statement refuted by others of more Catholic persuasion (6). (Calvin's comment on the

multiplicity of Holy Nails is also worth quoting: “I think even a child could see how the devil has been mocking the world by depriving it of the power of discernment on this point”(5b).)

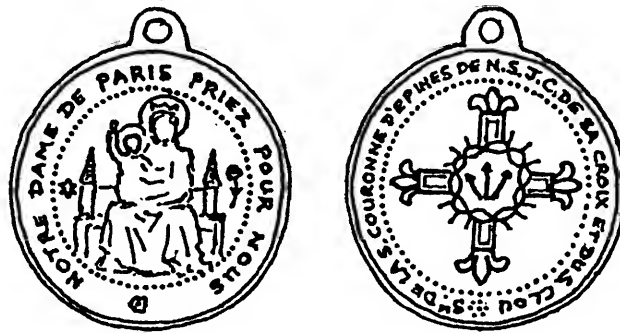


Fig. 3

All of which brings us to the bronze medal shown actual size in Fig. 3, which is probably of 19<sup>th</sup> century date, and which, as its obverse indicates, relates to the church of Notre Dame de Paris. Its reverse shows the Crown of Thorns with the three Nails of the Crucifixion at the centre of a fleurée-type Cross. The surrounding legend reads: SIR. DE LA S. COURONNE D'EPINES DE N.S.J.C. DE SA CROIX ET DU S. CLOU (= Souvenir of the Holy Crown of Thorns of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of his Cross, and of the Holy Nail). As this indicates, Notre Dame claims to possess the Crown of Thorns (4f), one of the Nails (4b), and a fragment of the True Cross (4g), all said to have been acquired by St. Louis.

Sticking with fragments of the True Cross, I cannot resist quoting the following passage from W.H. Mallock's book *In an Enchanted Island, or, a Winter's Retreat in Cyprus* (1892). The incident described occurred on a voyage from Brindisi to Port Said:

“Our own part of the ship was not invaded by anybody, except one solitary figure. He was a man in European dress, with wistful eyes and a fine Hellenic face. He spoke English well, and, advancing to us with dignity, he asked us if we would buy what he called “special photographs.” “Be off,” said one of my friends, “Take the beastly things away with you.” “Not beastly,” he said gently, “academic.” Then opening a leather case which he carried, he produced from its depths some polished cubes of olive-wood, and with no change of manner except an increased gravity, “Perhaps,” he went on, “you would like a piece of the true Cross.”” (p.44-5)

Alas, Mr Mallock says no more than this. Now, one sees very few defences of the manufacture of spurious relics, but the following is of interest in respect of fragments of the True Cross – some with forged ‘certificates of authenticity’ :

“Yet how can the present age say ought in condemnation of such practices, while Buddhas innumerable are turned out by machinery, in a Christian country, for the worship of devotees in the far East. “(4h)

But getting back to relic-related medals, the silvered bronze medal shown 1½ times actual size in Fig. 4 relates to the great Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres. It is probably of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The reverse of the medal shows the relic in

question – the STE. ROBE DE LA STE. VIERGE (= the Holy Robe of the Holy Virgin) – though apparently it is not actually a robe at all, but a veil. The ‘robe’, as it was long believed to be, was brought to Chartres by Charles the Bald in AD 876. It was apparently kept wrapped up until the time of the French Revolution when its wrappings were unceremoniously torn open to reveal not a robe but a silken veil some six yards long (7). Some believe it to be the veil worn by the Virgin Mary at the birth of Christ (8), but, be that as it may, the medal-makers clearly continue to see it as a robe or tunic! The obverse of Fig. 4, incidentally, shows the Virgin of the Pillar (Notre Dame du Pilier), a statue of the Virgin and Child which sits atop a marble pillar in the north choir aisle of the Cathedral. She belongs to that controversial class of statues known as “Black Virgins” (9).

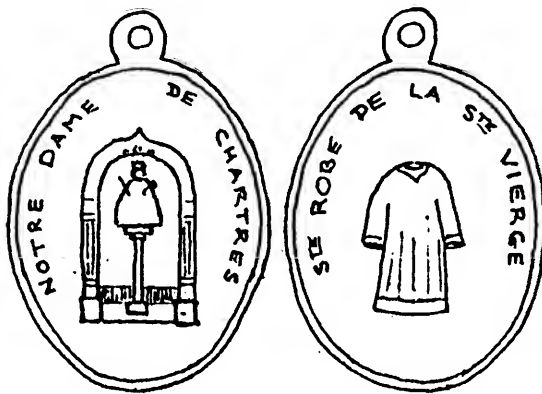


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

The Virgin of the Pillar again appears on the obverse of another silvered bronze medal shown 1½ times actual size in Fig. 5. The reverse again shows the robe/veil with surrounding legend TUNIQUE DE LA STE. VIERGE / DON DU ROI CHARLES LE CHAUVÉ (= Tunic of the Holy Virgin / Gift of King Charles the Bald.) Below the ‘tunic’ is 876, the year in which Charles the Bald brought it to Chartres. Above the ‘tunic’, a banner reads CARNUTUM TUTELA (Protector of the Carnutes, the ancient name of the people who occupied the Chartres region), I presume in reference to occasions on which the tunic/veil has been used as an amuletic battle standard by the inhabitants of the city (eg in 911, when it was credited with routing the forces of Rollo and his brigands).(7) Atop the ‘tunic’ is what appears to be a laurel wreath of victory. Incidentally, sharp-eyed readers will have noticed that on the illustrated medal CARNUTUM has been mis-spelt with an initial P, a mistake I have noticed on a number of these medals.

Another interesting Chartres medal has a reverse very similar to that of Fig. 5 (with CARNUTUM TUTELA), but with the obverse shown in Fig. 6. This depicts another statue of the Virgin and Child known as Our Lady Underground (N.D. DE SOUS TERRE.) The story here is a curious one (7). Legend has it that when, in “Druidic times”, Saints Polentianus and Savinianus reached Chartres to preach the gospel they found that, in a grotto on the hill where the Cathedral now stands, the people already had an altar erected to “Virgo Paritura”, the Virgin about to give birth (hence the VIRGINI PARITURAE on the medal). Some go further and claim that the Druids used to sacrifice here to “the Mother of the God who was yet to be born”. That much may well be Christian embellishment, but it does seem as if when Christianity arrived

at Chartres it did find some curious druidic precursor of the Virgin and Child. At any rate, the site of the druidic grotto, now containing the statue pictured on the medal (which has VIRGINI PARITURAE sculpted across its base), is preserved in the crypt of the Cathedral. Actually the statue depicted on the medal is one made and enthroned in the crypt in 1857, an older statue having been destroyed, like so many others, in the French Revolution: hence the RETABLIE LE 15 7RE 1857 (= re-instated the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1857) on the medal.

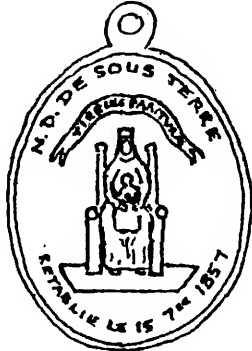


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

The tunic/veil of the Virgin brings us to Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), and yet another Holy Tunic – that depicted on the obverse of the aluminium medal shown actual size in Fig. 7 – which is one of the four great relics of Aachen: the cloak of the Virgin, the swaddling clothes of Jesus; the loin cloth he wore at the Crucifixion, and the cloth used to catch the head of John the Baptist when it was chopped off at the instigation of Salome (10). On the medal the Virgin's cloak is being held aloft by two angels. The other three relics are apparently stored in protective wrappings and look like parcels hanging on a Christmas tree! The legend on the reverse of the medal reads ZUM ANDENKEN AN DIE HEILIGTUMS-FAHRT AACHEN (= Souvenir of the pilgrimage to the relics, Aachen.)

The Cathedral of Aachen was built by Charlemagne and it was he who obtained these relics – and others – for it. Also in the Cathedral are part of the winding-sheet of Jesus; a thorn from the Crown of Thorns; part of one of the thongs with which Jesus was lashed prior to the Crucifixion; the sponge which was dipped in vinegar and given to him on the Cross; a leather belt that once belonged to Jesus; and a girdle of the Virgin (11). If any reader is raising an eyebrow at some of the items in this list, let me reassure them that these are positively the sensible end of the market. Elsewhere in Christendom are the foreskin (several of them!) and umbilical cord of Jesus; some of his milk teeth, not to mention copious quantities of Mary's milk; some bread left over from the feeding of the five thousand; some wine left over from the wedding feast at Cana; the tail of the ass on which Christ rode into Jerusalem; and possibly the silliest of all, a bottled groan of St. Joseph! (12) Speaking specifically of the aforementioned ass's tail, Calvin noted:

“One really cannot tell which is most wonderful, - the folly and credulity of those who devoutly receive such mockeries, or the boldness of those who put them forth.” (5c)

Indeed, one cannot help but think that many an oriental trader must have doubled up with laughter all the way to the bank at some of the outrageous impostures he was

able to off-load onto overly-gullible Christians! And how one wishes one could see what *really* went on when St. Helena acquired all her relics on her famous pilgrimage to the Holy Land !

Given that even the tail of a donkey could wind up in the west as a revered relic, it comes as no surprise to learn that just about every tangible item associated with the Passion of Christ has surfaced at one time or another. The notice affixed to the Cross mockingly proclaiming Jesus to be King of the Jews (4i); the Holy Lance – the spear that pierced Christ’s side as he hung on the Cross (several of these)(4j); and the Pillar of the Flagellation (5d) have all been ‘recovered’. Nor must we forget the specimens of Christ’s blood that have been piously preserved, most famously, perhaps, the Holy Blood of Bruges (13). Likewise lesser relics, like the Veil of St. Veronica (14) or the sword with which St. Peter cut off Malchus’s ear (15) have found their way to the west. Perhaps the largest relic, though, is that associated with our next medal: the Scala Sancta (in Latin; Scala Santa in Italian) or Holy Staircase.

The Holy Staircase – now to be found close to the basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome – is a flight of twenty eight marble steps (now encased in wood) said once to have belonged to the palace of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, and brought back to Rome by – need one say it - St. Helena. Their significance to Christians is, of course, that Christ is supposed to have used them to face his trial before Pilate, as a result of which it has become customary for more pious pilgrims to ascend the staircase on their knees whilst meditating on the events of the Passion. The staircase is shown on the obverse of the modern aluminium medal shown 1½ times actual size in Fig. 8, the accompanying self-explanatory legend reading SCALA SANTA / ROMA. The reverse of the medal shows an image of Christ enthroned, an icon painted perhaps as early as the sixth century (and, apparently, much re-painted since), but which legend claims was “a picture not made by human hands” (Acheiropoeta). It is kept in a locked sanctuary (the so-called Sancta Sanctorum) at the top of the Holy Staircase, encased in an elaborate silver cover which leaves only the face visible. The accompanying legend reads, in Italian, EFFIGE (sic) DEL SS. SALVATORE (= Effigy of the Most Holy Saviour.) (16)



Fig. 8

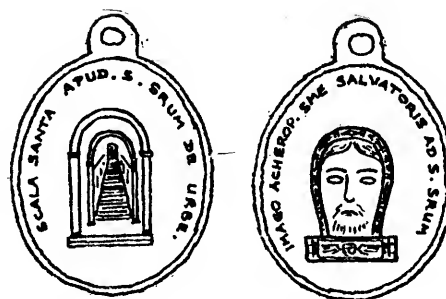


Fig. 9

The older (19<sup>th</sup> century) bronze medal shown actual size in Fig.9 is closely related to the preceding one. The obverse shows the Holy Staircase again, with Latin legend SCALA SANTA (sic) APUD. S. SRUM DE URBE (= the Holy Staircase at the Sancta Sanctorum of the City.) The reverse shows the face of the image in Fig.8 as it appears peering from behind its silver casing. (17) The accompanying legend reads



IMAGO ACHEROP. SME SALVATORIS AD S. SRUM (= the Image, not made by human hands, of the Most Holy Saviour at the Sancta Sanctorum.)

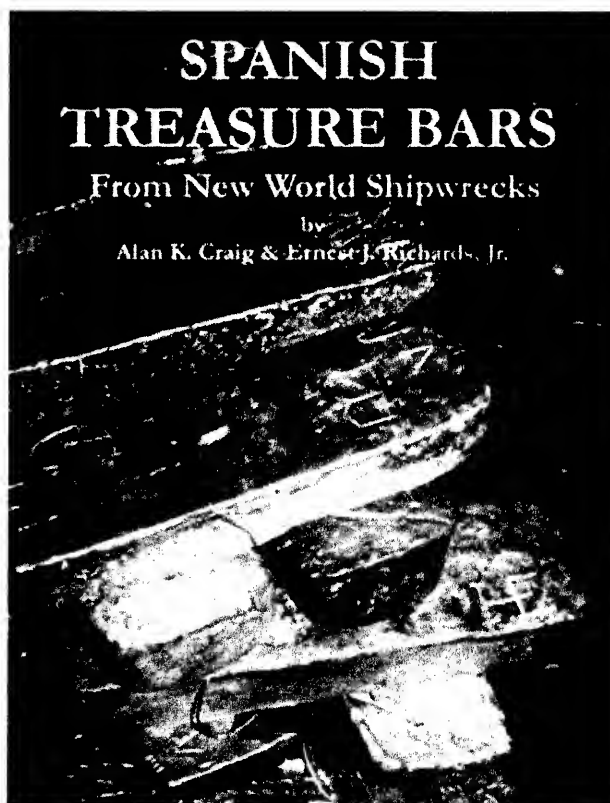
**Notes.**

1. "Religious Medals IV: St. Helena and the Holy Coat" in *NI Bulletin*, November 1997, p.273-6.
2. C.G.Herbermann et al., *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1907-1914), article "Holy Coat", in vol.7, p.400-402.
3. David Sox, *Relics and Shrines* (1985), p.4-5.
4. J. Charles Wall, *Relics of the Passion* (1910): a) For a good account of the rival traditions, see p.107-9; b) for a list of them, see p.115-6; c) p.116-8; d) p.109-110: note, though, that "bridles" can be translated "bells" here; e) for a list of places claiming to possess thorns, see p.136-8; f) For its history and a description of it, including a picture, see p.123-130; g) p.127; h) p.16; i) p.99-106; j) p.140-150.
5. I here use *A Treatise on Relics by John Calvin*, a translation published in Edinburgh in 1854. No translator is named on the title page, but I gather that in later editions he is named as Count Krosinski: a) p.233; b) p.234; c) p.243; d) p.242.
6. See, for example, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, in the article "Cross and Crucifix", in vol.4, p.531-2.
7. H.M.Gillett, *Famous Shrines of Our Lady* (1952), p.58-63.
8. K.J.Wright, *Catholic Shrines of Western Europe* (1997), p.39.
9. On Black Virgins see "Our Lady of Montserrat" in *NI Bulletin*, November 2000, p.317 (note 2).
10. Zsolt Aradi, *Shrines to Our Lady* (1954), p.49-51.
11. James Bentley, *Restless Bones* (1985), p.56.
12. For the benefit of the curious, I give only a sample reference for each of these here: foreskins – Bentley p.138-142; umbilical cord and milk teeth – Sox p.83; Mary's milk – Bentley p.136-7; bread, wine, ass's tail and bottled groan – Calvin (tr. Krosinski) p.231, p.229, p.243 & p.253 (footnote) respectively.
13. See "Symbols of the Eucharist" in *NI Bulletin*, December 1999, p.274-5.
14. See "St. Veronica and the Edessa File" in *NI Bulletin*, October 1998, p.256-263.
15. Sox p.116.
16. For both the Holy Staircase and the icon, see S.G.A. Luff, *The Christian's Guide to Rome* (1990), p.60-61; also Sox p.170-1. For "scala pilati" (= staircase of Pilate) as a mis-reading of "scala palatii" (= staircase of the palace), the palace in question being the old papal palace at the Lateran, see N. MacGregor, *Seeing Salvation* (2000), p.139.
17. The casing gives it the characteristic appearance of a number of Holy Face images, on which see the article cited in note 14 above.

## BOOK NEWS & REVIEWS

**Spanish Treasure Bars From New World Shipwrecks, Volume One:** by **Alan K. Craig & Ernest J. Richards, Jr.** 213 + x pages, *profusely illustrated*, 12 chapters, 2 catalogs, 2 appendices, glossary, bibliography, addendum and index. Paper cover, 8-1/2 inches x 11 inches, text in English. Published in 2003 by En Rada Publications, P.O. Box 1698, West Palm Beach, Florida, 33402-1698. 2003. [ISBN 0-9744705-0-3]. Available from publisher at \$45 plus \$1.85 shipping to a US address, others contact publisher for shipping: Write address above or telephone 561-965-2920, or email [seascribe@worldnet.att.net](mailto:seascribe@worldnet.att.net).

Released in October 2003, this long awaited book addresses a void in the numismatic literature of Spanish America. The interest in Spanish treasure bars increases every year and with every new shipwreck salvaged. Dr. Craig, is the author of *Spanish Colonial Silver Coins In The Florida Collection* and *Spanish Colonial Gold Coins in the Florida Collection*. Ernie Richards, author of many articles on treasure hunting and publisher of the news letter *Plus Ultra* have teamed up to assemble this new work. The authors have pulled together data from various shipwrecks and applied research and analysis to open up the world of treasure bars to the reader. While admitting that there is much information not included and the insightful projection that much new information will come forward now that there is a work on subject, we notice in the title the words "volume one". We hope the series continues.



We present here a review of the book, chapter by chapter.

Chapter 1, Introduction: 18 pp., 6 figures and 2 tables. Fundamental background information on royal taxation, royal treasuries, foundries, metal processing and the function of silver and gold bars in 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century Americas. Figures showing locations of royal cajas (treasuries) in Nueva Granada (Colombia) and Perú. A tax table of Potosí silver bars showing quantity of bars taxed for many of the years between 1572 and 1700. The introduction concludes with 7 interesting pages of excerpts of mint records from the Archivos de la Nación Boliviana.

Chapter 2, The Mimbres Bars: 34 pp., 12 figures and 2 tables. This chapter deals with the "Tumbaga" bars that were salvaged in the early 1990's. While the names tumbaga, tepuzque and guaín are discussed, the authors propose the name "mimbres" for these bars. The oldest new world Spanish shipwreck treasure so far discovered, the authors date the wreck 1527 or later, the name of the ship is as yet still unknown. Both the gold and silver bars are discussed, including small gold pieces stamped with marks which are possibly early coinage from Mexico before the mint was opened. In this reviewer's opinion these "Tumbaga" or "Mimbres" bars are of the highest historical importance and we are pleased to see them presented in the book.

Chapter 3, The Padre Island Wrecks: 4 pp. 8 figures and 1 table. Most of the figures are of the stamps found on recovered bars. The Padre Island wrecks of 1554 are important because of the archaeological records made and published.

Chapter 4, A Shipwreck near Cayo Inés de Soto: 8 pp., 8 figures and 1 table. Most of the new world treasure was shipped to Cuba, treasure fleets were assembled there for the trip back to Spain. The authors compare the stamps of these Cuban shipwreck bars with those from the Padre Island Shipwrecks.

Chapter 5, The Power Plant Wreck: 4 pp., 6 figures, and 1 table. Artifacts recovered from a power plant construction site on Hutchison Island, Fl. Including a remarkable silver disk with the letter "G", assayer Juan Gutierrez (?) and a scallop shell for the symbol of the order of St. James, "Santiago", situated in the Florenzada style cross typical of Mexican coinage starting with coins in the name of Philip II.

Chapter 6, Treasure Bars from the Atocha: 40 pp., 72 figures plus an additional 46 siglas (identification marks) assembled into a catalog of 10 sheets. The chapter covers stamps, assay "bites", how the Atocha silver bars were made and transported. A separate section discusses bars made at Oruro as well as Potosí. Also covered are markings applied to gold bars attributed to foundries in Colombia. Another wreck, called the "Deep Water Wreck" is covered and identified with the 1622 fleet because of markings on gold ingots also attributed to Colombia. This chapter is packed with information on the most publicized shipwreck salvaged. At the end of the book is a 42-page appendix with 16 columns of tabulated data for 963 Atocha silver bars, a result of researching the original documents made at the time of salvage. This appendix will be a tremendous asset to researchers.

Chapter 7, Nuestra Señora de las Maravillas: 8 pp., 8 figures plus an additional 34 siglas assembled into a catalog of 8 sheets. The Maravillas was carrying treasure recovered from the shipwreck of La Capitana, which had sunk on the Pacific side of the Americas, as well as other treasure, when it sunk off the coast of the Bahamas in 1656. Silver and gold bars are illustrated with particular attention to the markings on the gold bars and their apparent relationship with gold bars from the Atocha, which wrecked some 40 years earlier. Situated between chapters 7 and 8 is a section of 18 color photos, showing bars and some of the people associated with research of the bars, including Douglas Armstrong who wrote a book on the Tumbaga bars.

Chapter 8, The Jupiter Wreck: 6 pp: and 10 figures. So named the Jupiter Wreck because of its location at Jupiter Inlet, some suggest it may have been the San Miguel de Archangel. In addition to typical coins, the wreck has yielded "Star of Lima" coins, gold bars and a silver bar, which the authors present in detail, suggesting Santa Fé de Bogotá as the mint of origin.

Chapter 9, Treasure Bars from the 1715 Plate Fleet: 10 pp., and 18 figures. Silver bars, silver wedges, clusters of small silver ingots, gold bars and copper bars are presented.

Chapter 10, El Nuevo Constante née Duke of York: 4 pp., 5 figures. The El Nuevo Constante sank in 1766 off the coast of Louisiana. Buried in mud the artifacts were well preserved because of the lack of oxygen which when present accelerates corrosion. The copper ingots recovered are said to be indistinguishable from those recovered from the Atocha, which sank nearly a century and a half earlier. Also illustrated are 2 gold disks.

Chapter 11, Cuban Copper Treasure Ingots: 10 pp., 7 figures and 1 table. Interesting chapter on copper ingots, covers historical background, and a detailed examination of the chemical analysis on a sample ingot. Includes maps and cross sectional diagram of the El Cobre copper mine in Cuba.

Chapter 12, Old and New Falsifications of Spanish Bars: 8 pp., 11 figures and 1 table. In addition to photos and drawings, the authors include a list of characteristic attributes for "Legitimate Spanish Colonial Bars", "Contemporary Contraband Bars" and "Modern Fraudulent Bars". While the authors believe there must have been contemporary counterfeit bars, they have yet to identify any.

Endings: In addition to the appendix of Atocha silver bars mentioned previously, there is an appendix B, a Table of Numeric Notation Found in Early Documents, a two-page glossary, a five-page "References Consulted" section. There is a one-page addendum with diagrams of two gold ingots from the 1622 fleet and finally a 7-page index.

Spanish Treasure Bars From New World Shipwrecks, Volume One: is destined to be a standard reference work for the historian and numismatist.

Herman Blanton